

# HARVARD #4 EXCERPT

phenomenon I'm looking at -- I believe that's true, by the way, that's the phenomenon of the course, you can see here, in a way. But anyway, part of the problem, then, is, as I say, I spend more time than I probably need, perhaps, in a given group at chewing over, let's say, certain phenomena in order to make it credible that they actually happened. And I would encourage you to believe that -- this should be taken as interesting phenomena. And on the other hand, material that I have trouble digesting myself, you know, I've had trouble coming to terms with, that it ever happened, that I was part of it. Remember, when I say Indonesia, that's a period that I managed not to know about, but that's the period I was right in the heart of the government at that point. These were the people I was working with. But let me get, if I may, to the -- I want to, on the question you raise, now, of where should we go -- I said to myself last time but also this time let's do it. I do want to raise that for discussion. Let's do it before 9:30. How many have to leave at 9:30? Okay, so we're getting on. I will explain how, as I say, my thinking has changed ~~on this very recently in the way I just described just before this happened.~~

~~It actually happened -- and I think it's worth telling -- at a~~

~~following a~~  
~~3 day~~ <sup>gave</sup> Seminar I ~~was giving~~ with Ram Dass, of ~~Harvard~~, formerly of <sup>last July</sup> Harvard, ~~Richard Alpert of Harvard, kicked out for LSD, of~~ <sup>Alpert</sup> and Leary, as you recall. Okay. Ram Dass, who's now a Hindu or an eclectic Eastern mystic, a very smart and wise person, a very nice guy, also. ~~We were giving this seminar for three days -- I thought of it almost as a rehearsal for this~~

~~course, to some extent, although we haven't covered all the~~  
~~material, and of course~~ <sup>11</sup> he was approaching everything from the  
~~point of view of the Eastern or the mystical point of view; that~~  
if anything is bad, if there's such a thing as anything bad,  
it's to the dualistic .... to have a we/they kind of paradigm.  
All is one. From a practical point of view, that means you  
assume in approaching any given social problem ~~too~~ that the  
other people are you. ~~You're all --~~ <sup>you are</sup> ~~it's~~ all part of a unity.  
But also, in a lesser sense, ~~that~~ they're like you, ~~that~~ they're  
not unlike you; they're not <sup>that</sup> ~~different, they're not~~ ... It's a  
recognizable point of view. He was ~~a~~ very coherent, <sup>coherent</sup> ~~too~~ I felt  
uneasy about that because I was, ~~as I say~~, consumed by this  
feeling that ~~something that~~ Americans need to know is ~~a~~ not to  
trust their government, ~~you know~~, they should be skeptical, they  
should not ~~have a kind of~~ trust that their government is taking  
care of them in certain ways, which means, ~~to get to your other~~  
~~point of what do we do about it,~~ <sup>They should be aware that</sup> we have to do it ourselves, in  
some sense. We've got to protect ourselves, protect our children.  
~~It's important to know. And therefore~~ ~~It~~ is important to know  
that these people are not doing what we think they're doing; ~~and~~  
they're doing something that must be stopped. It would be  
helpful in stopping it to know how it's happening, why they're  
doing it. And ~~as I said, when it comes to the top layer -- I'll~~  
~~just use this to capsulize what I want to convey this time.~~ <sup>11</sup> I  
had come to the conclusion over some period that they <sup>"top brass"</sup> were  
different from what we thought they were, and they were differ-  
ent from us. This is the only explanation I could come to from



0 the fact, which was incontrovertible, that they were doing things that we didn't or shouldn't want them to do. I couldn't understand it, myself, in any other way than that they somehow were different from us, just by the very fact that they were able to do and order these things. ¶ Well, this made ~~of course,~~ Ram Dass very uneasy. I ~~mean it~~ seemed like a wrong paradigm to him. <sup>Although</sup> He wanted to be sympathetic to what I was saying, ~~but~~ he could not accept the idea. ~~And~~ at one point he accused me of saying that these people are of a different species from us. He said, "You talk as if McNamara and these other people were a different species." You may have heard <sup>the same thing</sup> ~~this~~ in my voice here, maybe. And I said, ~~that's unfair, because I had said specifically they are not of a different -- the words I had said were~~ "That's unfair, <sup>are</sup> these people were not of a different species. They are human. We recognize them. It's not just one person. It's not some psychopath. ~~One thing is to understand~~ It's a rather broad class. It's every President we've elected, and one has to assume that they are not that different from the ones who didn't win, So it's a class of people who are nominees or potential nominees. It's a rather broad class, ~~and it's~~ <sup>with</sup> a lot of people of different personalities." And I wanted to make <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ point that it was not <sup>simply</sup> a peculiar idiosyncrasy of these <sup>particular</sup> guys. They had ~~all~~ engaged in these threats and these assassinations and these massacres. So I said, "You're wrong, I didn't say that." <sup>they are a different species!</sup> But I thought over what he'd said, ~~as I will think over more as I do hear you, and I thought, now~~ how did I say it? What was I saying that made him think that I was making that big a distinction?

And I realized there was a kind of horror in the way I described them. I had said that I have absorbed the Gandhian teaching at the beginning of my career as a peace activist, back in '69.

~~That one doesn't~~ hates the sin, not the sinner. You distinguish between the person and what they're doing; you don't use the concept of evil people. But you do use the concept of evil -- unlike Easterners on the whole, unlike mystics -- Gandhi did use the notion of evil practices. And the distinction from thinking of ~~them~~ <sup>actions</sup> as being done by evil people is that -- to say that someone is an evil man or woman is to say they can't change, <sup>that</sup> that is their essence. That is their nature in life.

They're unchangeable. They are different from you, entirely of a different nature. Unlike humans, they can't change, and this is their essence. <sup>Such a concept would</sup> ~~And it~~ also suggest <sup>that</sup> that you have a right to eliminate them, which you don't. -- Because, as Gandhi says, you may be wrong. They may be totally reliable, what they're doing and what their role is, or what's good or bad. You don't have a right to eliminate them. But <sup>Gandhi said</sup> ~~you~~ -- and here's where he differs

from most Buddhists or Hindus. ~~Gandhi said~~, "But, <sup>you</sup> you do have a right, and in fact an obligation, to make judgements that certain things are evil practices," which means that ~~those people~~ <sup>you</sup> must <sup>try</sup> ~~be~~ if you can, nonviolently, without destroying the person, ~~you~~ ~~must try~~ to obstruct that, <sup>evil practice,</sup> stop it, resist it, expose it. You must not cooperate with it. This is the meaning of evil in that sense: <sup>9</sup> Something that you have an obligation to resist. It seemed to me, and I said this to <sup>the conference participants,</sup> ~~his seminar~~, who were mostly ~~Ram Dass followers, so they mostly came from -- with a bent~~



many of whom had a bent

toward mysticism, so it was quite challenging to say to them, "I don't think you can dispense with the concept of evil as associated with practices, ~~and~~ in this operational sense that I'm describing, practices that are so bad, so destructive, so dangerous that you must block them ~~in~~ And <sup>you must</sup> to do it without killing people or harming people." Okay. Well, that didn't bother him. I saw this as a Gandhian invention in the field of mysticism. Gandhi came from a largely mystical tradition too in his own thinking. But this was an innovation that he made: A new way of being a <sup>Buddhist</sup> ~~Buddhi~~ <sup>(sp?)</sup> ~~gati~~ — Not merely by setting an example, not merely by meditating, not merely by striving for personal enlightenment in order to bring about other peoples' enlightenment, <sup>also</sup> but to cooperate with other humans in putting your bodies in the way of evil social practices, practices which were preventing other people from enlightenment, and were bringing pain. This is not in the Buddhist tradition. And yet it has the spirit, you know, of Buddhism. Anyway. ~~But~~ <sup>so</sup> I had to face that although I was saying there were no evil persons, I didn't really sound as though I believed that about some of these people. And, in fact, they even caught me that I couldn't keep from saying that if there was <sup>never</sup> ~~(if I could believe in evil forces in the world, which I didn't, but if they existed)~~, then I would have to perceive Edward Teller as a channel for those forces. ~~And~~ <sup>Although</sup> I had to admit there was some contradiction in what I was saying, ~~and~~ I couldn't retreat from that perception entirely. And this is true of some of ~~these~~ other people as well. ~~Obviously Hitler.~~ And of course the paradox that I was coming up

with whereas everybody would perceive what I was saying about Hitler, let's say, it's harder to see that about Teller, and certainly about McNamara or Jack Kennedy.

Okay. Here was the insight. ~~as~~ "You ~~know~~, I have been thinking about McNamara and other people like that as if I hadn't read Milgram... As if I didn't know that normal, natural ordinary people could, under some circumstances, do evil things. And of course -- actually, ~~Even~~ Milgram doesn't shrink from the word evil at all; he's not a mystic. He says, they do evil things. That's the way he describes it. Now if that's true for the followers, ~~shouldn't I~~ have I really absorbed that into myself, you know, as I look at the superiors? And ~~I think~~ it was around that time, I forget exactly how it came about that I -- I guess I said something to this effect, and Kelman then said <sup>after he heard me give a lecture,</sup> "You should read some articles of mine." He ~~heard me give a~~ <sup>lecture.</sup> That's how I found the Kelman articles. I read those and thought, "My God, this is the hypothesis I've been looking for." And of course the gist of it is, ~~finally, that what is true -- I mean, the proposition is that~~ <sup>that</sup> what's true for the followers is true for the leaders. They don't necessarily have to be much different as people from what I thought they were. And ~~that is to say,~~ <sup>T</sup> they're not different from me, and ~~they're not different -- you know,~~ Obviously there are individual differences, but they're not, on balance, different from us, from most people. And yet they manage to do these things. Which is to say, ~~by the way~~ <sup>expressing</sup> it's another way of putting my sense of dread -- we should not take reassurance, ~~I'd already~~



~~concluded~~, from the fact that our Presidents appear to be normal people. ~~And~~ the answer is not that they're secretly abnormal people, ~~so~~ that's another hypothesis that I've been living with, — —

you know, that they kept it from us but that they really managed to be much more brutal and tough than we imagined. But ~~that~~,

in fact, normal people in organizations, either as leaders or followers, ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> capable of planning, implementing, conceiving evil practices under certain circumstances which, unfortunately,

do arise rather frequently, to a far greater degree than we

imagine. And that must be true of ourselves if we were in those

positions. If our surprise about this and the ability to be

fooled by this process reflects the fact that we don't

understand ourselves that well, we don't understand how we

~~behave~~ would behave in those circumstances. And all of this

has -- anyway, this is a model of how it comes about, which

bears, then, on the question we want to turn to: What do we do

about it and how do we go on studying? But if I may, then,

literally -- it's now ten after -- let me take five minutes, six

minutes, and run through very quickly, then, I think, some

propositions that I meant to start with an hour ago. That will

finish the content for this lecture. We'll go on to where do we

go from here, and what do we want to talk about in this course.

First point, a comment on the title of the Kelman article, which is "Violence Without Moral Restraint: Reflections on the Dehumanization of Victims and Victimizers." I want to focus on the word dehumanization. It is related to a statement that he makes on pages 38 and 39 and a number of other places as

follows: Sanctioned massacres occur in an authority situation, the structure of an authority situation is such that at least for many of the participants the moral principles that generally govern human relationships do not apply." Similar statement on the preceding page. "We can learn more by looking not at the motives for violence, but at the conditions under which the usual, moral inhibitions against violence become weakened." And it goes on on the next page to say <sup>that</sup> a major condition on which they become weakened is an authority situation, A situation in which somebody is recognized as having the right to tell you what you ought to do next in that situation. And in those situations, the usual moral inhibitions, ~~apply to the general --~~ the moral conditions that generally govern human relationships, do not apply." Anybody see anything wrong with those statements? ~~With five minutes I won't wait to answer. I'll tell you.~~ ~~Generally, usually.~~ What situation are we usually in 40 hours of the week and a good deal more than that?

COMMENT: An authority situation.

DE: How often are we not in an authority situation, ~~whether~~ in the family, (as children, at least), ~~or~~ in school, in a corporation, not just in the Army; In an organization of any kind? We're talking about organizational behavior. In other words, the usual moral principles apply usually, except most of the time of our waking adult lives. Isn't that what we're saying? Isn't that saying that the word usual and moral here



and general here is a misdefined term to some extent, which keeps us from observing that these are not principles that apply. -- if he's right in saying they don't apply in this organizational setting, <sup>then</sup> they're not the usual principles. And if we think they are the principles, or the usual principles, we are being misled; ~~and~~ we're misleading ourselves and others. ~~I think I observed this earlier point the dehumanization of victims and victimizers.~~ He says, Kelman says, at one point, that the process is dehumanizing for a number of reasons, because it involves foregoing a sense of choice, a sense of freedom, free will, a sense of responsibility, ~~which is~~ surely a major aspect of being human, <sup>are they</sup> ~~is it~~ not? Civilized, surely. It involves a willingness in an obedience situation to do things that are uncivilized -- kill people on command, even ~~kill~~ <sup>massacre</sup> women and children on command, ~~it turns out~~ <sup>this is</sup> massacre. Surely unhuman behavior. ~~And finally,~~ it involves doing this to other humans, ~~and thus breaking a sense of empathy with those other humans and~~ <sup>thus</sup> constricting, ~~then,~~ one's sense of empathy and familyhood with ~~these other people~~ <sup>the species</sup> which Kelman defines plausibly <sup>this sense of empathy and community</sup> as an attribute of being human. ~~A sense of community~~ If you're killing people, if you're torturing them, ~~if you're what not,~~ you're clearly expelling them from the sense of your community and you're constricting your own community. On all these grounds, then, you are acting like a robot, a machine, and not a human, he says. Look again at the word human. If he is right, that, in fact, this is characteristic in its objective sense, organized behavior, state, community, team, organization bureaucracy, ....

approximation<sup>ly</sup> in the last 5,000 years that we call civilization,  
that is human experience. Situations in which you're not in  
that are certainly not more frequent, really not as frequent.

QUESTION: You don't include the family in your ....

DE: Well, I meant to say family, but in, particularly, obviously,  
the hierarchical aspects of the family, Not, of course, the  
modern marriages that we're all in. <sup>rather</sup> But situations where some-  
body in the family is a recognized authority, Especially vis a  
vis the children.

5. Okay, there are several things wrong, I think, with this  
4. use of the word dehumanization. Just on that last point, that  
by killing these other people or being prepared to torture them,  
you are restricting your sense of the human community, and thus  
you're being less human yourself, you have less of a sense of  
community. There -- and I put this to him, and I think he  
agreed -- there I think he's simply on a wrong track. He really  
describes the torturers or the massacres people as people who  
feel less human for this reason, feel less self-esteem. My own  
experience in any study of this suggests immediately these  
people tend to feel and be members of elite groups which they  
are extremely proud to be part of, and it so happens that the  
killing and the torturing is the price they pay as evidence for  
loyalty, and the loyalty, in turn, is the price of an extremely  
tight sense of community. ~~which~~ maybe they are people who  
would pay a higher price than most for the community. But they



get ~~as~~ ~~and~~ members of the SS, indeed, like members of the Marines or other groups you could think of, from anyone's immediate experience, far from suffering in that situation from a loneliness or sense of isolation have a very gratifying sense.

[end of Side A, Tape 2]

[Side B, Tape 2] [continues with student speaking] ...

experienced as .... disloyal and bad thing to do. And as an individual or as a family is trying to change its rules, people experience, I think, about that same feeling. And there may be something interesting to learn from therapy. Therapy ...

COMMENT: That's interesting. The word may not be authority. The word may be the system in which you are that gives you a sense of being alive, that gives you a sense of having meaning, that gives you a sense of being connected. You know, that may be the key to ...

DE: Well, in what you're doing, you're responding to a hierarchical superior, an authority. But you're saying that why you do it is not necessarily related to your relation to that person, but your relation to the whole system in which you're both embedded. And <sup>to</sup> your desire to remain related. And if you disobey that authority, what is the real sanction? <sup>It's</sup> Not what he may do to you, <sup>to punish you, but rather that</sup> but that you will be expelled as a member of that group.

So what can we do to lower the risks?  
Surely a large part of addressing that question is to get people to be more independent in their judgments and their actions, to listen to that aspect of their conscience

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Lecture 4

CARL SAGAN

SABARAH

SHATILA

RALPH MCGEEHEE

MILGRAM

D'AUBISON

KELLMAN

LANDALE

LOU CONINE

W.Y. ROGUE

GENERAL SCHNEIDER

CARLO PRA

EUGENIO MARTINEZ

[EDITOR OF NEW YORK TIMES]

CARL CAZEN

ALBERT SCHWEIR

JOHN SHUSHART

MILA CALEY

BOOI SATVA

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ROGERS

CORY

COLBY

~~MILGRAM~~

~~CARLO PRA~~

THIRTY COMMITTEE  
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